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TO WHITE HOUSE IMMEDIATE

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NODIS

WHITE HOUSE FOR DR. BRZEZINSKI

FOL RPT SEOUL 2723 ACTION SECSTATE 5 APR 77 QUOTE

S E C R E T SEOUL 2723

NODIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR PINT KS US

SUBJ: KOREA TROOP WITHDRAWAL AND HUMAN RIGHTS

SUMMARY: AMBASSADOR UNDERTOOK FIRST ROUND OF TALKS WITH KEY KOREAN LEADERS, PRELIMINARY TO MEETING WITH PRESIDENT PARK. REACTION TO GROUND TROOP WITHDRAWAL RELATIVELY MILD PROVIDED ADEQUATE TIME AVAILABLE PREPARE KOREAN FORCES. ON OTHER HAND, PROSPECT FOR RELEASE OF KIM DAE JUNG AND OTHER MYONGDONG PRISONERS ABOUT 50-50, WITH DECISION RESTING ENTIRELY IN PRESIDENT PARK'S HANDS. RESISTANCE TO RELEASE BASED UPON FEARS OF AROUSING FURTHER AND BROADER INTERNAL DISSENT AND ADVANTAGES OF RELEASE IN TERMS US SUPPORT FULLY RECOGNIZED. END SUMMARY.

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1. DURING PAST TWO DAYS (APRIL 4-5) I HAVE HAD LENGTHY PRIVATE SESSIONS WITH FOREIGN MINISTER PARK TONG-JIN, ASSEMBLY SPEAKER AND FORMER PRIME MINISTER CHUNG IL-KWON, AND DIRECTOR KCIA KIM JAE-KYU. I HAVE ALSO REQUESTED EARLY APPOINTMENT WITH PRESIDENT PARK AND EXPECT TO SEE HIM WITHIN NEXT FEW DAYS. MY PURPOSE IN PRELIMINARY TALKS WAS THREEFOLD: FIRST,

TO REVIEW KOREAN SITUATION AS SEEN FROM WASHINGTON PERSPECTIVE, PARTICULARLY AS RELATES TO HUMAN RIGHTS -- MYONGDONG PRISONER QUESTION; SECOND, TO TAKE SOUNDINGS ON CURRENT ATTITUDES IN KOREA, PARTICULARLY PRESIDENT PARK'S; AND THIRD, TO BUILD SUPPORT FOR RELEASE OF KIM DAE JUNG AND OTHER MYONGDONG PRISONERS, WHILE CALMING CONCERNS REGARDING GROUND FORCE WITHDRAWAL. MY APPROACH VARIED DEPENDING UPON OFFICIAL INVOLVED AND I WENT INTO PARTICULAR DETAIL WITH KCIA DIRECTOR ON PRESIDENT CARTER'S VIEWS AS SET FORTH TO FOREIGN MINISTER TO MAKE SURE THEY WERE FULLY ON RECORD WITH ROKG. BUT, EMPHASIS WITH EACH WAS ON IMPORTANCE OF RELEASE OF MYONGDONG PRISONERS IN TERMS KOREA'S SELF INTERESTS IN ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH US. REACTION TO MY APPROACH FOLLOWS.

2. GROUND FORCE WITHDRAWAL. FOREIGN MINISTER WAS SOMEWHAT SURPRISINGLY MOST QUESTIONING OF THREE OFFICIALS INVOLVED REGARDING WITHDRAWAL, ALTHOUGH HE ACCEPTED THIS AS FAIT ACCOMPLI. HE SAID THAT SERIOUS QUESTIONS HAD BEEN RAISED REGARDING REASONS FOR OUR UNDERTAKING GROUND FORCE WITHDRAWAL AND FAILURE TO USE LEVERAGE OF WITHDRAWAL TO SEEK CONCESSIONS FROM NORTH KOREA. HE ALSO URGED THAT WE LEAVE OPEN POSSIBILITY OF ALTERING WITHDRAWAL PLANS IN CASE OF CHANGE IN INTERNATIONAL ATMOSPHERE AND THAT WE TAKE STEPS WITH BOTH PRC AND USSR TO MAKE SURE THAT NORTH KOREA NOT MISINTERPRET GROUND FORCE WITHDRAWAL.

3. FONMIN ALSO MENTIONED THAT PRESIDENT CARTER'S PRESS CONFERENCE STATEMENT OF MARCH 9 HAD BEEN MISINTERPRETED AS EFFORT TO CLOSE OFF CONSULTATIONS BEFORE PRESIDENT HAD EVEN SEEN
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FONMIN. THESE CONCERNS CLEARED UP TO SOME EXTENT WHEN FONMIN HAD EXPLAINED TO PRESIDENT PARK THAT PRESIDENT WAS RESPONDING TO PRESS QUESTION RATHER THAN MAKING FORMAL ANNOUNCEMENT, BUT POINT REMAINS SOMETHING OF AN IRRITANT. SPEAKER CHUNG CONFIRMED THIS REACTION, MENTIONING THAT PRESIDENT PARK AT MEETING WITH POLITICAL SUPPORTERS HAD EXPRESSED HIS INITIAL DISSATISFACTION IN SOMEWHAT STRONG TERMS.

4. FONMIN CONCLUDED, HOWEVER, THAT PARK GOVERNMENT RECONCILED TO GROUND TROOP WITHDRAWAL AND PROBLEM NOW IS TO PREPARE ITS PUBLIC, WHICH VERY UNEASY. SPEAKER CHUNG AND DIRECTOR KIM CONFIRMED THIS VIEW. CHUNG ACCEPTED MILITARY RATIONALE, BUT URGED ADEQUATE PREPARATION FOR WITHDRAWAL. CHUNG ALSO RAISED QUESTION OF DIFFERENCE BETWEEN GERMANY AND KOREA ON FORCE WITHDRAWAL, WHICH I SOUGHT TO EXPLAIN. DIRECTOR KIM LIKewise RECOGNIZED ROK HAD MANPOWER TO FILL IN GAP BUT NEEDED TIME TO PREPARE ITS FORCES AND DEVELOP SUFFICIENT COMPENSATORY FIREPOWER. HE URGED FULL CONSULTATION ON THIS PROBLEM. I REASSURED BOTH THAT THIS WAS CERTAINLY OUR INTENTION AS PRESIDENT CARTER HAD STATED.

5. HUMAN RIGHTS. IN DISCUSSING HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE WITH ALL THREE OFFICIALS, I MADE EXPLICITLY CLEAR THAT CRITICAL POINT WAS RELEASE OF KIM DAE JUNG AND OTHER MYONGDONG PRISONERS. I STRESSED PRESSURES TO FAR RESISTED TO PUBLICLY CRITICIZE ROKG ON THIS ISSUE AND RELEVANCE OF ISSUE TO CONGRESSIONAL SUPPORT FOR ASSISTANCE TO BUILD UP OF KOREA FORCES AND TO ACCEPT GRADUAL, CAREFUL WITHDRAWAL OF GROUND FORCES.

5. NONE OF THREE OFFICIALS CHALLENGED POINTS I HAD MADE AND ALL, INCLUDING PARTICULARLY KCIA DIRECTOR KIM, RECOGNIZED POSITIVE EFFECTS IN US OF RELEASE OF MYONGDONG PRISONERS. HOWEVER, REACTION ON PROSPECTS VARIED.

6. FONMIN WAS VERY CAUTIOUS AND INDEED FEARFUL OF DIRECT APPROACH TO PRESIDENT PARK ALTHOUGH ACKNOWLEDGING THAT HE
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MIGHT RESPOND TO PRIVATE APPEAL FROM PRESIDENT CARTER. HE, AS OTHERS, REPEATED WARNING WE HAVE HEARD BEFORE ABOUT ADVERSE PARK REACTION TO PUBLIC PRESSURES, TO WHICH I RESPONDED THAT IS EXACTLY WHAT WE ARE TRYING TO AVOID BY RAISING ISSUE PRIVATELY.

7. SPEAKER CHUNG THOUGHT PROSPECTS WERE A LITTLE BETTER THAN 50-50 THAT PARK WOULD RELEASE KIM DAE JUNG, BUT WARNED THAT PRESIDENT PARK NOT REALLY FULLY AWARE OF PROBLEMS FACED IN US SINCE FONMIN, HE BELIEVED, DID NOT PRESENT FULL FLAVOR OF CONVERSATION WITH PRESIDENT CARTER. IN FACT, SPEAKER SAID THAT PRESIDENT PARK SPOKE SEPARATELY WITH FONMIN AIDE WHO PRESENT AT MEETING WITH PRESIDENT CARTER TO GET SECOND VERSION. (I HAVE ALSO DISTINCT IMPRESSION THAT FONMIN DILUTED HIS REPORT AND THEREFORE WILL CONVEY FULLY POINTS MADE BY PRESIDENT CARTER DURING MY MEETING WITH PRESIDENT PARK.)

8. KCIA DIRECTOR WAS LESS OPTIMISTIC, POSSIBLY FOR THE RECORD, ABOUT PROSPECTS FOR RELEASE. HE STATED THAT KIM DAE JUNG MUST FIRST ACKNOWLEDGE PAST ERRORS AND PROMISE TO BEHAVE WITHIN LAWS BEFORE RELEASE POSSIBLE. BUT, AT CONCLUSION OF OUR LENGTHY SESSION HE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THERE WERE OTHER VIEWPOINTS, E.G. US PROBLEM, WHICH NEEDED CONSIDERATION.

9. RESISTANCE TO RELEASE APPEARS TO BE BASED ON FOLLOWING GROUNDS. FIRST AND FOREMOST, PRESIDENT PARK IS FEARFUL THAT OUR PRESSURE TO RELEASE KIM DAE JUNG IS PRELUDE TO MOVE BY USG TO OUST HIM PERSONALLY. SPEAKER CHUNG MADE THIS POINT MOST EXPLICITLY AND FONMIN IMPLIED AS MUCH. SUSPICIONS ARE PARTICULARLY AROUSED BY CONTINUAL BOASTS BY KIM DAE JUNG THAT PRESIDENT CARTER'S OBJECTIVE IS TO REMOVE PRESIDENT PARK AND PUT KIM DAE JUNG IN OFFICE. SECONDLY, ROKG FEARS THAT KIM DAE

JUNG RELEASE WILL LEAD TO FURTHER PRESSURES FROM US AND TO
OPPOSITION TACTICS AIMED AT ENGAGING US IN INTERNAL KOREAN POLITICS.
THIRD, DIRECTOR KIM PARTICULARLY EXPRESSED CONCERN THAT RELEASE
OF KIM DAE JUNG WILL AROUSE A NEW WAVE OF DISSENT AND STREET
DEMONSTRATIONS WHICH KIM IL SUNG WOULD MISINTERPRET AND TRY TO
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EXPLOIT, ERGO DESIRE FOR ACT OF CONTRITION BY KIM DAE JUNG
AS CONDITION FOR RELEASE. DIRECTOR PARTICULARLY POINTED TO
DANGER OF STUDENT DEMONSTRATIONS AT THIS PRESENT TIME. ON OTHER
HAND IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT SPEAKER CHUNG DOES NOT AGREE
THIS WOULD BE CONSEQUENCE OF RELEASE. FINALLY, KCIA DIRECTOR
KIM EXPRESSED DOUBTS THAT RELEASE OF KIM DAE JUNG WOULD NECES-
SARILY HAVE POSITIVE EFFECTS IN US SUFFICIENT TO BALANCE OFF
RISKS INTERNALLY IN KOREA. I TRIED TO COUNTER LATTER POINT AND
PARTICULARLY SPOKE OF STRENGTH AND BROAD SUPPORT FOR PRESIDENT
PARK EVIDENT IN KOREA.

10. COMMENT: I BELIEVE THAT TALKS WITH FONMIN, SPEAKER
AND KCIA DIRECTOR WILL PROVE USEFUL IN PREPARING GROUND-
WORK FOR APPROACH TO PRESIDENT PARK. BUT CRITICAL FACTOR
REMAINS PRESIDENT PARK'S OWN ASSESSMENT OF WHETHER RISKS
INVOLVED INTERNALLY ARE WORTH TAKING IN TERMS OF ADVANTAGES
GAINED IN US SUPPORT FOR KOREA. MY IMPRESSION IS THAT THERE IS
STILL CLEAR APPRECIATION OF OUR WILLINGNESS TO AVOID PUBLIC
PRESSURES TO RELEASE KIM DAE JUNG AND THIS COULD WELL MOTIVATE
PARK TO ACT ON HIS RELEASE, ONCE STUDENT SITUATION QUIETS DOWN.
BUT ISSUE TO PARK NEVERTHELESS MAY REMAIN WHETHER HE VIEWS
HIMSELF PERSONALLY AS TARGET OF USG ATTACK AND I TRUST THAT
FULL AND ACCURATE REVIEW OF PRESIDENT CARTER'S REMARKS TO FONMIN
WILL REASSURE HIM.
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